communities in ACTION

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communities in ACTION

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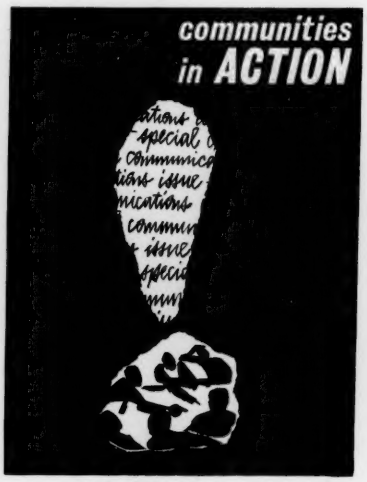

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COMMUNICATING

A newspaper reporter comes to town and questions a random sampling of its poorer citizens. The answers he gets make a good story: "What War on Poverty?" "No, we never heard of it." "We sure haven't got it here." And so the word gets out. There is a failure of communication between the Office of Economic Opportunity and the poor of America.

If we were selling candy bars or soap or cigarettes, this would indeed be something to worry about. But we are not. We are in business to provide services to people who need them. Our first communication problem is not to create an awareness of our brand name, but to let people know that these services are available to them. Our second job is to persuade the people who need them to use them.

Neither of these tasks is easy. But lack of success here constitutes a major failure of communication. After all, no one, especially the proud inhabitants of rural America, likes to be numbered among the poor. Too much advertising about poverty and deprivation is likely to turn away the very people who need our programs the most. In most parts of rural America the term "War on Poverty" is a misnomer. It suggests a vast, noisy, visible effort. This is simply not the case. A Head Start program, an adult basic literacy class, a neighborhood center —these do not constitute a war.

Tell people how they can help themselves and their pride is served, not punctured. This is the substance of our message. This is the story that must be told by State TA's, the heads of local community action agencies, VISTA Volunteers and all the rest who are responsible for bringing our programs to people—and the people to our programs.

Communication techniques must be designed to fit the local situation. How do people in a given area learn about all the other things they have to know: about the weather, about prices, about what's happening to their friends and neighbors? Most often they get the news by word of mouth and this is by far the most effective, but most difficult and time-consuming technique of communication. There is no substitute for one trusted person telling others, in a voice of friendship, about a program that can do them some good. Trust and conviction, not gimmickrey and cleverness, are necessary ingredients of successful communication of OEO programs.

This means enlisting the people and the institutions who are already trusted and believed by the community: the church, the grange, the school, the community center, the visiting nurse, the judge—even the general store proprietor. These are better sources of information and motivation than all the posters, billboards, leaflets, or brochures Washington can produce.

Local radio personalities, the country music favorites, the county agent —everyone who is customarily listened to and believed should be enlisted in the task of telling people about the new things they can do to help themselves. Of course, anyone involved in this task should be made familiar with the program details. If they do not get the message across with knowledge and conviction, there will not be belief.

By far, the best communicators are those who have had successful experience in OEO programs themselves. Without a great deal of red tape or bureaucracy, Head Start parents, Adult Basic Education enrolees and other program participants can be asked to serve as unofficial communication aides. There is no substitute for the personal testimonial of a satisfied consumer.

In America, we tend to make a mystery of communication. We call it advertising or public relations and invest it with a jargon and technology all its own. In the area of community action, this is sheer nonsense.

Our message must be told in the simplest possible terms, as simple as the local weather report, news about the crops and whether Mrs. Jones' baby was a boy or a girl. It must be told through a medium local people are tuned in on, not an elaborate communication network suddenly imposed upon them. And, if they don't know there's a War on Poverty going on, that may be all to the good—so long as they are involved in it deeply and meaningfully enough to call it their own.

—HERBERT KRAMER, Director, Public Affairs, OEO

(Reprinted from *Rural Opportunities*, Sept. 1966)

getting the message m

in the beginning

The idea of the War on Poverty did not spring up full-born like Athena . . . it has its roots in the initial fabric of the American Dream . . . it is in fact a summation of this nation's potential as the most humanistic society in man's history.

The War on Poverty was and is simply an affirmation that this land has the technology, daring and "heart" to eliminate all vestiges of economic poverty.

This "better War" is simply a nation's intent to close the opportunity gap between those four-fifths of its people who have economic security and that one-fifth still outside the mainstream of national affluence.

That we dare this war is evidence it can be readily won. Anti-poverty programs are more accurately a "mopping up," a squaring away of problems that have their roots in history and have their solution in our present knowledge of what went wrong and what we can do using the social sciences, the techniques of industry and commerce and our moral imperatives to make things completely right and so bring America to a new plateau of greatness.

Concern for the poor, in this time, was dramatized anew in the writings

"Getting the Community Action Message Across" is this issue's theme.

What follows is a compendium of communications ideas collated from many imaginative anti-poverty programs throughout the land or developed as technical aids by the Public Affairs section of the Office of Economic Opportunity.

They are to be considered, especially by the newly launched Community Action Agencies, as suggestions, as stimuli, as points of departure.

Further, the Federal government has no right to spell out suggested ways of disseminating information about community action projects launched locally. This contradicts the very letter and spirit of the Economic Opportunity Law which considered Community Action Programs as strictly local projects determined by a broad-based coalition of concerned citizens. Total self-determination remains the most effective way of solving problems of poverty as they exist in a given community.

"Getting the Message Across," then, is a report, an assemblage of the more innovative aspects of communication in the War on Poverty—in a nation so diverse, with such a multiplicity of poverty situations, it is the concern of **Communities In Action** that this issue be no more than a gadfly, a springboard for dialogues between CAA's the length and breadth of the land on common and particular problems of communication.

What works for CAP in the Missouri Delta, what rallies citizens towards community action in Chicago, is not necessarily the same thing. How best to communicate is a decision each community must make for itself.

Communities In Action hopes for consensus on one premise alone. We quote ourselves from our first issue: "Nobody supports something even for his own good, if he never heard of it."

message messag ss

of men like Michael Harrington and Edgar May.

Then the mass media zeroed in on this bleak aspect of our culture and, once most thoughtful citizens considered the paradox of poverty amidst plenty, the climate for change was assured.

The President's call for a Great Society was the catalyst and the response of Congress in the form of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 provided our national mandate . . . the War on Poverty was launched.

Communications, then at the national level in these first days of the War followed a clearly defined pattern, repeated on a smaller scale over and over again each time a new community mounts its own local offensive against poverty.

First, this climate of awareness, at the national level created by the new explorers, the sociological writers; locally by concerned journalists.

Second, the presentation of the problems by leaders in challenging political and philosophical terms.

Third, the focus on the problems by mass media, radio, television and publications.

Fourth, the translation of problems into programs of solution; *i.e.*, community action.

Therefore in the first days of the War on Poverty it was necessary to remind citizens powerfully that poverty existed and its elimination was everyone's responsibility.

Communications began with a barrage of posters, radio and television anouncements and news releases from the nerve center of the War on Poverty, OEO.

This might be considered the "narcissistic" phase of the War's public information efforts.

Posters showed poor kids in slums —begrimed, tragic, powerful reminders of the problem, challenges to the good instincts of that vast body of affluent Americans who would shoulder the cost of anti-poverty programs . . . nobody planned it this way but in this initial publicity there was an undercurrent that can be best analyzed as "isn't it good of us (meaning the 'haves') to be concerned about the have-nots."

Many of those newly enlightened of the need to end poverty went from "self-love" ("I want to do something for the poor.") to a state of mind Russell Roberts has described as the "poverty is charming mentality."

These attitudes were discernible in the first public information efforts of opinion-makers in and out of government. This was a time when the press was ripe with feature stories about lovable slum children and wise, old half-starving mountaineers and long-suffering Indian squaws. All of this was necessary. It was the surface manifestation of America's re-discovery of its major domestic problem, poverty and denial of opportunity.

When Community Action Programs became operational, when the poor themselves began to participate in the programs designed for them, when local conflicts about anti-poverty projects erupted, when the ammunition of the War on Poverty began to explode and social change began to be felt, when the War was no longer an abstraction, the problems of communications became acute, they remain acute, because providing information about our poverty crusade, it turns out, is as

getting the message m

complex a problem as the casual factors of poverty.

After the initial communications honeymoon, the gutwork of explaining the War on Poverty to the poor, the middle class, to business and industry and often to instruments of government was the real communications challenge.

Anti-poverty warriors soon discovered that while everyone was against anyone being poor in the abstract, reality was something else again.

It was this way in Appalachia where many impoverished would rather die than admit their poverty (See "Moving Mountains," **Communities In Action,** July 1966).

It was this way in the megalopolis of Newark, N.J. (See "Nobody Wants Welfare," **CIA,** May 1966).

mostly you listen!

It was this way in the very seat of Federal government, Washington.

Jim Gibson remembers what getting the message across involved at this center of things.

It is 1964. Gibson, an articulate, gifted young human relations expert, was on a task force of eight social workers attached to the President's Commission on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime, a project later absorbed into the War on Poverty.

Gibson was assigned the Cardozo area of Northwest Washington, a high-density, high-poverty area, almost completely Negro, on a two-fold and seemingly impossible mission.

1. To find out what low-income residents in Cardozo felt would best help them help themselves as regards poverty.

2. Then develop a community center that would provide the dynamics of change.

Gibson and his co-workers went into Cardozo without pre-conceived notions.

He recalls that beginning. There he was, middle-class, scion of an Atlanta family, an intellectual, smack dab in the middle of a tumultuous explosive ghetto. High crime rate, tragic unemployment ratios, an urban American wasteland just 20 blocks from the White House.

"First, we tabled all that social worker jazz, that was not going to help too much," he recalled.

Then he and his fellow professionals went "fishing." They "hung out" on ghetto street corners. They braved pool rooms. They listened to what the people had to say and only after listening did they begin to shape answers . . . answers based on what they had heard.

This, Gibson feels, is the first step in the communications process, not telling but listening.

Once they got the feel of the terrain, they began the staggering job of community organization.

This occasioned what Gibson considers their first mistake in reaching the urban poor.

"We arranged mass meetings. And they proved disastrously wrong," he said. The task force's appeal in this assemblies was basically "all of you who are poor come to a rally. . . ."

The poor turned out in goodly numbers but the meetings were failures.

Why?

Gibson said, "What we had not considered, in concentrating on the poor, was the total socio-economic structure of the Cardoza ghetto. What happened was the middle-class people came out also, and they took over the meetings and stifled the poor altogether."

The aggressiveness, the "enlightened self-interest" to borrow Saul Alinsky's phrase, of the ghetto middle class was something Gibson and associates had overlooked. Even ghettos have a pecking order.

The poor were out-talked by "successful" residents of the neighborhood, educators and other professionals, small businessmen and the clergy. Historically these leaders had been accustomed to representing the under-educated, inarticulate masses of people crowded into Cardozo.

"Their civic mindedness was admirable," Gibson reflected, "But they sure as hell got in the way of community organization at the grassroots level. They used the rallies to make speeches and the poor just sat there glowering and cowed by al these words."

The solution?

"To speak directly to people with problems of poverty," said Gibson, "We decided to ignore affluent people who thought they spoke for the poor."

There was an element of tragicomedy in this next phase of the Task Force's work.

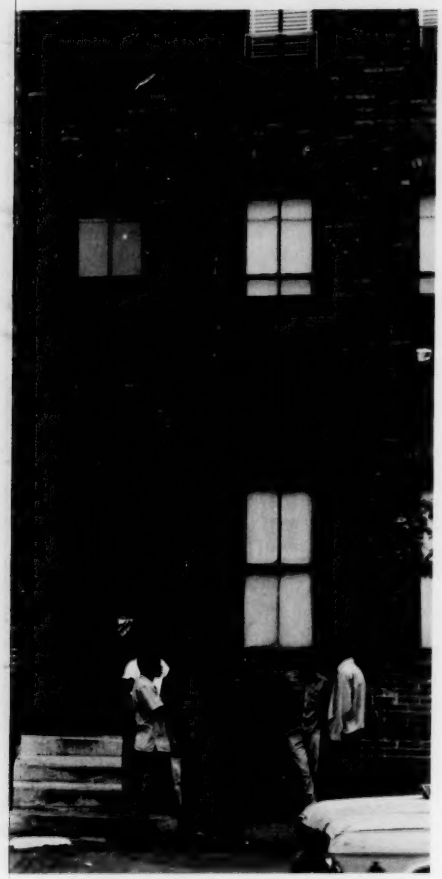
"We spent a lot of time holding small meetings in the homes of poor people and just as much time ducking the middle-class folks who wanted to make speeches."

What was proven out, however, has meaning for those who must involve urban poor in CAP programs.

"We found we were effective in limiting meetings to 10 or 15 people," said Gibson, "holding them in a poor person's home where neighbors felt comfortable. They spoke out, gave their ideas volubly, and indigenous leaders so vital to community organization emerged very quickly."

Gibson sees mobilizing a neigh-

message message across



borhood as a dialogue on different levels. "We never discounted the importance of middle-class leadership. We needed their support but we found that when they became a a buffer between us and the target group, everything bogged down. As the poor became more involved in the programs we were developing, they develop confidence to work with bourgeois residents without withdrawing or freezing up."

Gibson, an innovative social theorist, saw some of his pet notions blasted away after he became director of Cardozo Neighborhood Center Number Two, a multi-service center of the United Planning Organization, the District of Columbia CAA.

He had first reasoned that in a troubled black community, instant involvement of people could be effected if community workers with a background of civil rights militancy were used.

What he discovered is revealing.

"We'd sent out these angry but sincerely concerned young men into the neighborhoods hoping that they could arouse people to come to the Center and get involved in programs.

"I hoped they'd be catalysts but these guys would go among a group of unemployed, unskilled Negro male adults using race pride and militancy as prods and get absolutely nowhere.

"What would happen is that the guys on the corner would listen to all these embryonic Malcom X's and then ask what was a continually devastating question: 'Man, can you get me a job today? Can you get me some money today? That's what I need right now'."

Gibson ditched militancy as a dynamic for getting ghetto people into community centers once he intellectually realized (or had proven to him) what he already understood emotionally, *i.e.,* money, or the hope of same, takes precedence over politics, at least in urban America slums.

He found conversely that women made the best community organizers in the Cardozo area. "They were never as sophisticated as our male workers but they got better hearings from men and women."

Gibson hazards the guess that this ability to communicate by his female non-professionals is rooted in the matriarchal structure of Negro slum families. The women workers came into houses, talked pragmatically about day-to-day problems of families, nursery schools, traffic lights, pregnancy, welfare payments.

"Our women were able to organize complete blocks containing some 300 or more people and our civil-rights-oriented males had a hard time bringing in six people at any given time," he reported.

Still he does not discount the value of male workers in Negro slums.

"They gave us our best ideas, they reflect the life-style and mood of the neighborhood and they keep things humming," he said. "The women proved better at the hard-rock job of door-to-door, block-by-block communication. This requires a patience most men just don't have."

Gibson, now a planner with the influential Potomac Institute, is a veteran of those first days of the War on Poverty. He directed Neighborhood Center for a year and came out of it with his own set of ground rules for grass-roots communication at the one-to-one level.

Said Gibson:

"1. You don't go into a neighborhood of the poor working with the traditional leadership but you don't go in ignoring them either.

"2. No mass meetings. Fifteen poor people is the limit.

"3. You hire sub-professionals because they represent the thinking and life-style of the neighborhood, and you listen to their ideas.

"4. Whatever you're going to do that is bold, imaginative in a Community Action Center, you do it in the beginning before bureaucracy sets in. In the beginning of anti-poverty programs, there is flexibility. Later procedures harden. There is a certain amount of give and take before bureaucracy rears its ugly head. Even your indigenous non-professionals are quickly consumed by bureaucracy. Once non-professionals begin to get deserved promotions they tend to get farther away from the people they came from and you soon lose their direct knowledge of how things are."

getting the message m

reaching the poor door to door

People outside pockets of poverty can be reached through traditional communications media readily enough for affluent citizens take a lively interest in the press, television, learned journals and other instruments of information.

But getting to the poor: to folks who often are completely cynical about all the things successful citizens take for granted and who believe nothing because their environment destroys belief: reaching them is often another proposition entirely.

But communication in poor communities is completely possible and in the beginning of CAP projects the most effective force is the non-professional community worker. A man or woman who knows the life-style, problems and modes of expression of his environment has half the communications battle won. Non-professionals can reach homes where professionals come to absolute zero.

For some valuable insights community action staffers can put to use, **Communities In Action** tape-recorded a group interview with three women workers at Washington's United Planning Organization's Neighborhood Development Center Number Two. They were on the team of non-professionals trained by Jim Gibson and his task force. (See page 6, "Mostly You Listen!")

Their remarks on getting to poor families in an urban slum might have wide-spread application. Two of the women were in their forties, the third was a young woman in her early twenties. All three had been public assistance recipients before the War on Poverty began and they entered new careers in community organization.

This is transcribed verbatim.

WORKER #1

Q: What was the first project you remember on reaching people in any way?

A: Door-to-door contacts.

Q: What did you find out?

A: Some people would accept you and some would reject you.

Q: Well, give me an example.

A: Well, some people understood what was going on in the War on Poverty by hearing it on the radio and some people hadn't heard about it at all.

Q: Okay, so on a typical day you were explaining all services that the Neighborhood Center offered to each family you contacted?

A: Yes, as much as possible.

Q: Say there's a housewife and she's opening her door and she doesn't know who you are. How would you begin?

A: I would tell her that I was from the United Planning Organization, which meant UPO, and I was a neighborhood worker and then I'd explain that a neighborhood worker was not a social worker, not a worker interfering with her family's lives but interested in the neighborhood. Then I'd ask her if possible to try to describe her neighborhood to us in order to help us with our jobs.

Then I'd also explain about helping us reach the children, and any of the problems in the neighborhood that she would like to see worked on, as a group of people from the neighborhood.

Q: In other words, you didn't tell her about what programs you had; you let her tell you what she needed. Was that it?

A: Well, in other words, as she and others explained their neighborhoods to us, that brought up all the things they thought that they needed in their neighborhood and this is where the neighborhood workers and the people came into better relationships with one another.

Q: Did most people who let you into their homes, go along with you, or was there a lot of resentment or what?

A: Some let us in nicely and some didn't understand about the programs or the agencies and some rejected everything, because they didn't understand it. Some shut the doors in our faces and some let us in and sometimes we spent at least two hours with one person.

They had the most difficulty understanding what development center meant. They did not understand what it was going to develop in the neighborhood.

Q: Well, how would you usually try to explain this?

A: I would try to explain to them that the citizens themselves would be helping themselves and that the Center was here to help in any way it could to help the community understand what was going on in the community. A lot of the times they still didn't understand it.

Q: Did you talk usually with housewives or was the man of the house around?

A: I talked with the man of the house sometimes, in the evening, sometimes after six and later in the evening, but our day contacts were the housewives.

Q: Looking back, what cropped up more as a complaint or a need of the women you talked with?

A: The children in the neighborhood. This started popping up more and more. The children need something to be done with them. They were not being supervised correctly by the parents, or supervised correctly by the schools. This sort of thing.

Q: Did these mothers give any indication that they didn't think the kids were getting proper education?

A: In some sections, yes.

Q: Did the idea of playgrounds pop up?

A: Very much.

WORKER #2

Q: I understand you have not been in Washington too long yourself. Did you have mis-givings about doing neighborhood organization in a strange community?

A: I was a little afraid, but after I got in the field, I found out it was different, that people in general are basically the same.

Q: Now what do you mean by that? They aren't bad and they aren't good, just people?

A: They were just people. I would usually look into a person's eyes to try to think what type of feeling he or she had at that particular time, and I would try to talk with him with the feeling that he or she conveyed to me. I got along pretty good, you know, trying to talk to them and trying not to step on them, just convey the program to them.

Q: What do you mean about stepping on their toes? What do you have in mind?

A: In a particular block I'm working, I've run across the people from this particular part of the country and they are hard to get along with, they're very hard to talk to, period. Where I come from we call them "geeches". (EDITOR'S NOTE: Indigenous term for Negroes from coastal South Carolina) They are very hard people to know, period.

Q: Are they very suspicious?

A: Very suspicious. And if you don't say "good morning" the right way, you have a fight on your hands, right there, and from hearing this first lady that I met, speak, I knew where she was from, right off, and I knew how to talk to her because I had dealt with them before.

Q: Give an example.

A: You can't give them the impression that you are laughing at the way he or she is speaking or you got trouble on your hands. I just start out with general conversation and more or less I make them lead me.

Q: You identify yourself, don't you?

A: Yes, I let them lead me. Of course, everyone of 'em says "We don't need anything". These people can get down to the last hominy grit, and they say they don't need anything.

Q: False pride?

A: Yes, quite a bit.

Q: Well, how do you get past this pride? I imagine sometimes you go into their homes and these quarters are broken down and they're obviously in need?

A: Yes.

Q: Well, how do you get through the false pride?

A: I have lived around them, before. You get to talking and 9 times out of 10 they want to tell you about themselves, not any problems. I get to talking and I say, "Well, I'm from such-and-such a place, and so and so and so" and they want to know, "Do you know such-and-such a woman?" In a round-about way, I always get down to what the problem is, they don't feel that they are telling me anything, but in a way they are telling me what their problems are, without just coming out and saying, "Well, I need money for the rent, I need food, I need this and that". They never come right out and say it. They always say it in a round-about way.

Q: Could you give me an example? Act out the role of a "geechee" housewife. She needs everything.

A: She'd probably say, something to this effect: "You talk like you're from the South. Are you from the South? What state are you from?" I'd probably say, "I'm from North Carolina." She'd say, "What part of North Carolina you from?" And I tell her what part I'm from and we get to talking back and forth and back and forth. Then maybe she'll say, "You know, things aren't like they are at home. They have been hard here. Like right now, I don't have such and such a thing, I need so and so and so. And my kids, the schools aren't at all like they are at home. When I was at home, I could do so and so and so."

In that way she is telling me she is not particular about the schools, she's not particular about the type of life she has to lead here, you know, in the District, because the rent is much more than she would have to pay where she came from and in a sense, she is asking me, "How can I go about alleviating these problems?"

And so I talk around. I don't come directly out and say, "Well, you should go to the Neighborhood Center." Maybe I'd say: "What do you think about organizing a block club? What do you think, maybe, about attending a PTA meeting?"

"Well," she might say, "**those** people!"

I say, "Well, c'mon and go with me. I'm sponsoring two children." Something like that.

In talking to this particular lady, I might find that she was referring to people who she felt had a little something of substance, something that—

Q: Mainly Washingtonians, or white people, colored people or—?

A: People who had something she didn't have. Things that she wanted maybe for her kids, that maybe the lady across the street could afford to give her kids, you know, that she didn't have.

Q: By "those people" did she also mean people who had jobs?

A: Not necessarily, but—yes, more or less. She thought she would be out of place if she attended a PTA meeting.

She would say something like, "They are too fussy about you saying anything, you know, how you say? Out of order? If you wanted to say something at the PTA meeting about your children.

This one lady had attended such a meeting. I knew what she was talking about when she say, 'I'd be out of order'." Where she came from, when she attended at PTA meeting, she could get up and say what she wanted to say and nobody told her to shut up or sit down or pull Roberts' Rules on her. She was worried about procedure.

Q: Door-to-door were you usually able to find out why these Southerners come to the District or did that come out?

Nine times out of 10, people from, say, South Carolina, North Carolina and even farther, come to the District because some "fancy pants" relative returns home in a rented car and saying "Man, I'm living."

Q: He's lying right there?

A: Uh-huh. And the family comes to Washington. A lot of the fellows jump up and come here and bring their family, ending up with no place to stay, but they don't want to go back home for fear of being laughed at. They're stuck.

Q: Now, with women like this who might be embarrassed being around certain types of other people, how were you able to get them out or into the Neighborhood Center?

A: I would say, "Well, c'mon, let's go anyway, and see what's happening. If you don't like how the meeting goes and they come up with this 'You're out of order' business, we'll go back tomorrow, talk to the club president or at PTA we'll talk to the teacher and you can express your feelings."

Q: So you found you get results from these housewives when you sort of promise to run interference for them?

A: I promise that we run interference together.

Q: Truthfully, you talk to a great many women during the course of the week and make many new contacts, right.

A: Yes.

Q: Concentrate real hard now. What do you think these low-income women feel about their children?

A: Well, I feel they love their kids, really love their kids, but they have come here and have met problems that were unexpected. Some of them are problems that they don't even know how to cope with, which gives the school and maybe the next door neighbor the impression that they don't care about their kids. But these women and their husbands are worried about how they're going to feed them tomorrow, the matter of this pair of shoes for one of them tomorrow. They just don't have—I wouldn't say that they just don't have, but they don't take the time, you know, to give the kids close supervision. I wouldn't say that they don't love 'em, because you bother one of them you'll find out whether they love 'em or not.

Q: How do these people really feel when they're so far down they have to get welfare services?

A: They are embarrassed.

Q: They're embarrassed?

A: Because in the state they come from, say, South Carolina, it's been beneath a person's dignity to have to get on the welfare roll. And it's a sin and a disgrace to have to—they call it charity.

Q: Is there something about the way welfare's run here that makes them feel ashamed? Does the social worker, the welfare worker make them feel bad?

A: Not necessarily so. They have—they have this feeling since childhood growing up, I think, where

they come from, but it was a sin and disgrace to be on welfare. That you shouldn't, you know, take charity.

If you take charity, only accept it once. Take what you got and make what you want the next time. If you get down to scratch, don't let it be a constant thing. That's why I say they're generally embarrassed about, you know, being on welfare.

Q: A lot of mothers who are in poverty say, "If I just had a job. I want to help myself and my children." Has it been your experience that most of these women who say this, if you present them with some kind of work, that they would really snap at it or give some excuse.

A: Well, generally when they say they wish they had a job so they can do for their children themselves, they mean it.

Q: What do you think about it?

WORKER #3

A: Some people I talk to have definitions that UPO (the CAA) is only for "show" and not to help and this and that, and others had the impression UPO was like welfare, which I explained to them that it isn't.

Q: How did you tell them this?

A: Well, by grouping them together.

Q: How did you group them together?

A: From one apartment to the other. They wouldn't come out when we were meeting at the churches. I went to them. We organized this block head by head. First, we talked with three ladies. At their homes. One lady was home, and she had two visitors in the same apartment. They seemed interested.

So they called upstairs for three more, and their children, and they came down, so I thought this was good. They said they wanted a meeting and I said we can have it now, so we did. So I explained to them some of the things that you need to do to help yourself. I didn't promise 'em anything only to get together and get a understanding. So after this thing, I went back to this same street the next day.

Q: At this time did you generally explain what the UPO was for?

A: I explained all that at the beginning to the lady whose home I was in and she understood so she explained it to the others, as I was sitting there.

Q: At this point, what did they seem to be most interested in about the poverty program? Money?

A: No, they didn't ask about money. Strange, because the next group did. They were interested in anything they could do for their children and then they were telling me about the need for playgrounds and, you know, a lot of subjects. In organizing you don't tell the people what you want them to do, you listen for their gripes.

Q: What would you say this griping amounted to?

A: Well, this is one that I wanted to get in this next meeting. I complained that I was afraid to walk out on the street at night. So the next meeting they had a little letter written up for me to take to the director. Their letter asked about street lights.

I said "That's good, let's start on street lights." Well, after we got that one through then they talked about cleaning the streets and the alleyways.

Q: You're saying, correct me if I'm wrong, that while these people may be assumed by people "downtown" and elsewhere not to have an interest in the neighborhood, they are concerned about the neighborhood?

A: They are. They didn't know that they could go to city bureaus and do these things. Writing the letters and the visit they had made downtown about conditions was something they had never done before.

Q: Uh-huh. Well, how did you get them to take action?

A: After they elected their chairman and the secretary and everything, they chose the women to go down to the Commissioner's office. I didn't go with them. It was their problem. I wanted to get the people on the other side of the street interested so they voted to invite in everyone on the block.

Q: When you suggested they take their problem about street lights to the Commissioners, what was the reaction?

A: Well—the block secretary had already written a letter. I brought it back to NDC-#2 and had it typed and sent it back to her to initial. They read it in the next meeting and okayed it. They went down on their own.

Q: Say you want poor people in a neighborhood to know everything they have to know about your Neighborhood Center and that the Center can help them. To get 50 people out of this block, how are you going to do this?

A: Well, start anew in the block.

Q: Doing what, exactly?

A: Explaining the purpose of my job, the UPO and the purpose of organizing and grouping together.

Q: Okay, why don't you just knock on that table right there like it was a door and let Mrs. R —— there be the housewife. Let's see how this thing works. She'll know what to say and what not to say.

A: I'm not going there too early, so she's not in bed.

Q: You're not going there too early?

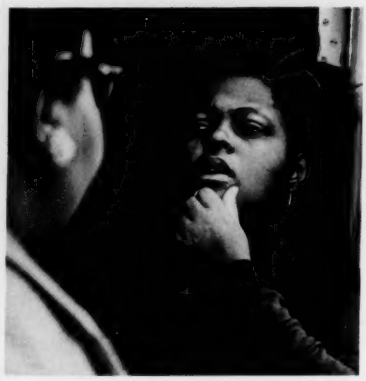
A: It'd be about 10:30. Some women when they wake up too early, they get the kids off to school, they want to take a little nap. Some are very agreeable and some are not. So I see Mrs. R —— about 10:30.

"Good morning, Mrs. Robinson."

MRS. R. ——: Good morning.

My name is Gertrude J ——. I'm from UPO, in other words, United Planning Organization.

MRS. R ——: What's that?



It's a center around there. In other words,—

MRS. R ——: Where?

14th and Clifton. In other words, it's a helping neighborhood center, a helping center for understanding and for you to help yourselves.

MRS. R ——: What's it going to do for me?

Huh?

MRS. R ——: What's it going to do for me?

Do you have any problems?

MRS. R ——: Lots of them.

Well, in other words, Mrs. R ——, we have a group to put together. We want—for instance—home rule for the District. If the people would group together, the law would get passed. We want more people to cooperate in—

MRS. R ——: For what?

Grouping together whatever is needed for your street, whatever is needed for your vicinity. If you'll group and group together, you can get it quicker.

MRS. R ——: And what is this supposed to be done on?

Well, I'm an organizer. I'm trying to get you, as I've talked to your neighbors, to get together and group together; and whatever is needed, you organize for it. A group can get more than the one person, Mrs. R ——.

MRS. R ——: Well, you come back tomorrow.

Thank you.

Q: That's the way it usually goes?

A: That's right. Or either this way. (Knocking on door) "Good morning. My name is Mrs. J ——. I'm with the United Planning Organization. We are out here to help the people help themselves. I stopped here this morning because you might be interested in our schools, since you have a lot of children.

MRS. B ——: Who told you I had a lot of children?

MRS. J ——: Oh, your neighbor across the way, Mrs. Ford.

MRS. B ——: Uh-huh. She did?

MRS. J ——: Are you interested in the schools, Mrs. B ——?

MRS. B ——: Uh-huh.

MRS. J ——: Well, would you care to come to one of our meetings?

MRS. B ——: I might.

MRS. J ——: Well, we're having one tonight. Are you interested?

MRS. B ——: I can't come tonight.

MRS. J ——: Well, what about in the next two weeks? Would it be all right if I come back and bring you some of the folders so you can read the pamphlets?

MRS. B ——: Hey, listen, lady, I don't know whether I can come next week or not.

MRS. J ——: Then I will come back. You don't mind, do you?

MRS. B ——: No. Come back when you will. I'll be here.

MRS. J ——: Thank you.

Worker #3—This actually happened. I went back there the second time. She says, "No." So after she saw me talking to the lady next door, she kind of moved the door chain and said "You know, I might come to one of them meetings." And she's getting along. But I had to work like hell to reach her!

Multi-service neighborhood centers offer many services to the poor but how do you define this simply?

EXPLAINING AN URBAN CAP CENTER

Chuck McDoo recently posed a question to "Communities in Action" writers:

"How do you get the Neighborhood Center idea across?"

Chuck is director of Washington's United Planning Organization Center Number One. His center serves an area of almost 100 square blocks in Northwest Washington with a poverty population of more than 37,000 individuals.

Neighborhood Center Number One has several Community Action services including social services referral, consumer education, health and housing.

"People on the staffs of anti-poverty projects understand all these CAP components," said Chuck, "but breaking complexities down into concepts the poor can instantly grasp, that is something else . . . and we don't have time for a neighborhood worker to lead every person eligible for our services through the front door. That would take 50 years."

What Chuck meant was he wanted action.

That was at the beginning of this summer. This center director's request was similar to that of other CAA staffers throughout the country who are eager to make Community Action centers increasingly affective instruments of self-help in communities of the poor.

McDoo explained his neighborhood's characteristics: completely urban, high percentage of rental property, high population density (See "Door to Door" for another view of this community), a great many migrants from the rural South, an alarming number of idle young people not in school; in summary, the classic profile of an urban pocket of poverty.

These are some of the communications approaches McDoo, after technical assistance from OEO-Public Affairs, hopes to get off the ground.

PROJECT ONE:

An easily grasped broadside that could be distributed door-to-door in advance of a neighborhood center worker's arrival in a given block.

A survey of newsstands, drug store magazine counters in the NDC #1 area suggested the possible format for often the only reading material to be found was "confession" magazines and sensational tabloids. Daily newspapers sold with less frequency in many publication outlets than cheaply printed escapist magazines. Although a completely Negro area, minority publications, again save for "confession" type magazines, did not sell well.

There is simply very little reading done in this neighborhood.

The obvious format for a broadside, for a piece of literature about the neighborhood center that would have interest, was some kind of blend of publications that were purchased in this area.

To dramatize the idea of a neighborhood center using a tabloid format without taking away from the dignity of the CAP concept was the creative challenge.

How the problem was broached is shown in the illustration on pg. 14.

McDoo, properly, insisted that the language be of the same flavor of the people of the neighborhood. "It should be their newspaper, not an outsider's idea of what their paper should be."

Such a four-page broadside,

printed on newsprint, offset or letterpress, is the least expensive literature to produce. McDoo would rather see printing costs donated by local institutions than draw any funds from the local community action agency.

"I'd like to see neighorhood businessmen pay for this," he said. "It's to their advantage to see conditions improved."

The photograph of the mother with several children used in this prototype tabloid has implications that go far beyond its immediate impact. This scene graphically sums up the urban "hard core, multiple problem family" so desperately in need of multi-service center programs. Since poverty is a horribly entangling web of dire circumstances, the photograph capsules a myriad of problems in one instantly identifiable image.

To the people in NDC #1's area, this scene has the ring of validity, it *is* valid: the photograph was taken three blocks from the center, it was not posed and the dialogue of the first person confessional article is a composite of the case histories NDC #1 social workers hear many times each day.

Other identifiable indigenous situations could be covered in subsequent editions of NOW!

NOW! PUBLISHED IN YOUR INTEREST BY YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER NO. 1, NINTH AND "O" STS. NORTHWEST.

8 MOUTHS TO FEED

I did not know where to turn. No savings in the bank. The welfare money only stretched so far.

"NO MAN, NO MONEY... I HAD TO DO SOMETHING!"

My man left. He couldn't find work once his old job closed down. He said we'd be better off without him. He was so ashamed not to be able to take care of us he just walked out.

I couldn't see my babies suffer!

FRONT

sum up plight of "multiple problem" family succinctly and in plain language.

large "story-telling" photographs for impact!

bold, legible type

IT SEEMED LIKE THE END OF THE ROAD. I was desperate to give my family a decent life. The world just closed in on me. All I could do was sit and wait for money from the welfare. I couldn't seem to do anything for myself or my family. Things looked bad.

ONE OF MY FRIENDS SAID "YOU WON'T GET ANY PLACE FEELING SORRY FOR YOURSELF."

She told me about community action programs at the neighborhood center.

She said Community Action is a new thing, part of the War on Poverty, and I could get help and help myself by going to Neighborhood Center.

But I also found out nobody's going to help me if I don't want to help myself.

THE LADY AT THE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER SAID "WE CAN GET YOU STARTED ON A BETTER LIFE BUT I DON'T WANT TO FOOL YOU, MOST OF IT IS UP TO YOU."

AT THE CENTER, THEY TOLD ME WHERE TO GO FOR EXTRA MONEY AND FOOD.

INSIDE

THE NURSE AT THE CENTER TOLD ME ABOUT FAMILY PLANNING. SHE DIDN'T BITE HER WORDS. SHE TOLD ME JUST LIKE IT WAS ABOUT HAVING BABIES AND WHAT TO DO SO I WOULDN'T MAKE MISTAKES.

THE YOUTH COUNSELOR AT THE CENTER IS HELPING MY OLDEST GIRL. SHE'S AT THE AGE WHERE SHE COULD MESS UP LIKE I DID.

I WISH MY HUSBAND COULD GET TO THE CENTER. He went back home. No jobs down there either. At least here COMMUNITY ACTION offers a man a chance to train for something that will last. Sometimes they pay while you learn.

IT'S STILL A ROUGH LIFE BUT IT'S BETTER THAN IT WAS. I'm pulling myself and my family together slowly, but surely.

ONCE I GOT UP NERVE TO LEAVE THE HOUSE AND JOIN THE CENTER I found out the government has a lot of things to help you when you're down on your luck. That's what COMMUNITY ACTION and the WAR ON POVERTY is all about.

I don't say the neighborhood center has all the answers. But when things looked darkest, it was a place that gave me a brand-new start.

IF IT HELPED ME, I FIGURE IT CAN HELP OTHER PEOPLE WITH PROBLEMS LIKE I HAD.

INSIDE

TAKE PART IN COMMUNITY ACTION

...MAYBE YOU'LL CHANGE YOUR LUCK.

WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?

BABIES? • MONEY? • FOOD? • HOUSING?
FREE LAWYER? • SICKNESS? • SCHOOL?
FAMILY TROUBLES? • CAN'T GET CREDIT?
NO JOB?

COME TO THE NEXT MEETING OF YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER. YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS ARE TAKING PART IN COMMUNITY ACTION TO HELP THEMSELVES. WHY NOT JOIN THEM?

CAP

BACK

introduce 'self-help' dynamic quickly – no sentiment

Neighborhood Center activity photos here

break down complex ideas to simplest forms

local imprint and phone number here

PROJECT TWO:

On NDC #1 turf, a lot of life is acted out on the streets. Apartments are crowded and in the summer people come outside to cool off. They tend to cluster at certain nesting places. There is a lot of foot traffic and perhaps as a carry-over from the Southern rural antecedents of many of the residents, sidewalk confrontations are endless. There is much of the elaborate, unhurried greeting of folks who meet along a country road only these are narrow city streets and dozens of people, in warm weather, are pausing to exchange neighborhood gossip and pleasantries, and as McDoo has observed, much of this on-the-sidewalk life-style involves two or more friends observing all other passers-by. This is called "hanging out" or "signifying."

Where a middle-class citizen gives his neighbor a fast "hello" and goes quickly his own way, NDC #1 people like to savor everything of the neighborhood and exchange comment about what they see.

All of which indicates the need and effectiveness of large Community Action posters that at once boldly attract passers-by and secondly are provocative enough to prompt comment. It must be kept in mind, in the NDC #1 area, as in most seaboard urban slums, word-of-mouth is a powerful communication dynamic.

Frank Dandridge, prize-winning magazine photographer *(Life, Look, SatEVEPost)* whose work is included in OEO's traveling "Profiles of Poverty" exhibit, felt the challenge of capturing pictures that would lend themselves to posters for grass-roots neighborhoods was exciting enough to accept a "Communities in Action" assignment.

Dandridge, who has an uncanny knack for recording urban slum life, went into NDC #1 territory with Pete Green, a community worker, as his trailguide and came back with a memorable series of photographs.

The goal here was to see Cardoza area people as they are and use these images as the basis for a series of Community Action posters.

OEO graphic artist Patricia Allott used the Dandridge photos as the basis for poster messages NDC #1 Director McDoo wanted to get across.

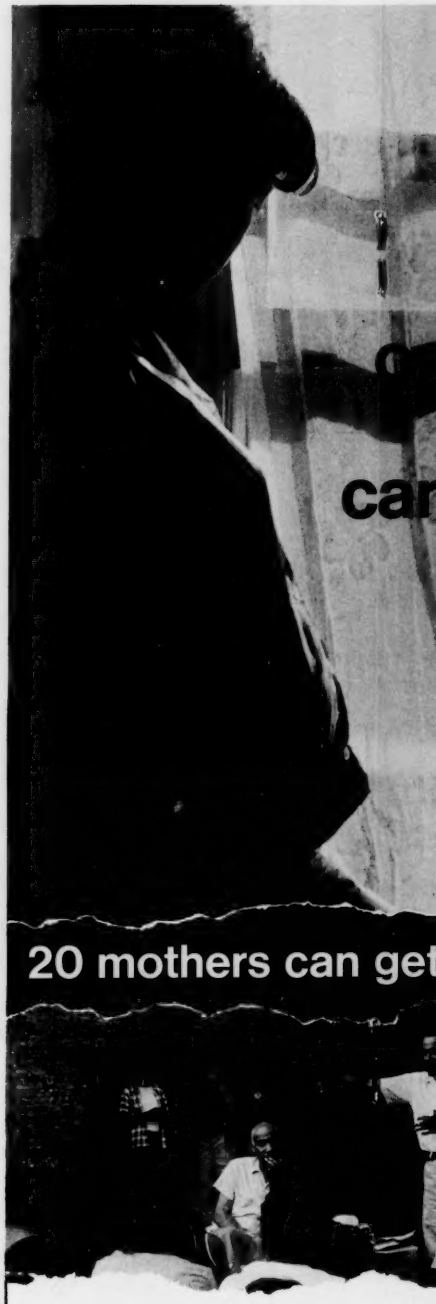
These were the premises the designs were based on:

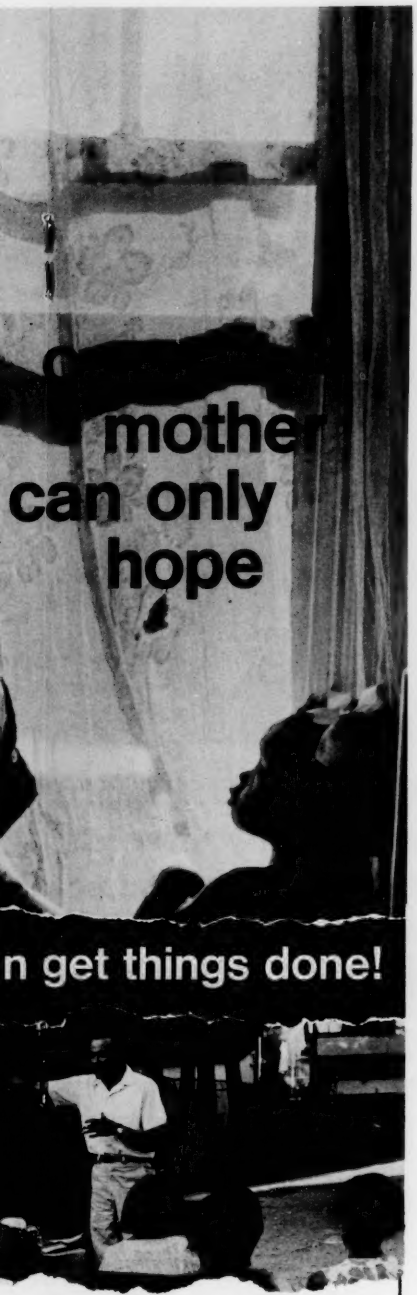
1. Use the language of the people.
2. Say what has to be said boldly, clearly.
3. Tell where NDC #1 is located.
4. Get people talking about the idea of the poster.
5. Stress community action, self-help.

McDoo also had strong notions of where such posters should be displayed. "Put them where the people we want to reach can see them. Design them in several sizes. Small enough to be placed on the top of saloon bars, large enough to cover half the first floor of a slum corner house. In barber shops, beauty parlors, grocery stores, busses. A lot of government people must think all posters must go in libraries, churches, schools.

"That's throwing away money reaching my constituency. You have to put your message where the people will get it, not where you'd prefer it for aesthetic or other considerations that don't have anything to do with the reality of poverty.

"Poor people drink, get their hair cut, go to dance halls, get their clothes cleaned, try to stay above water, so you'll find them where they can get solace and that is usually nowhere near schools and other cultural artifacts that have already failed them."


20 mothers can get
THAT'S **COMMUNITY ACTION!** Come to N
help yourself get nursery schools, credit un
neighborhood. IT'S FREE and all it take
some "soul." (Don't worry about a baby-si
ADDRESS: 9th and P Sts., N.W.



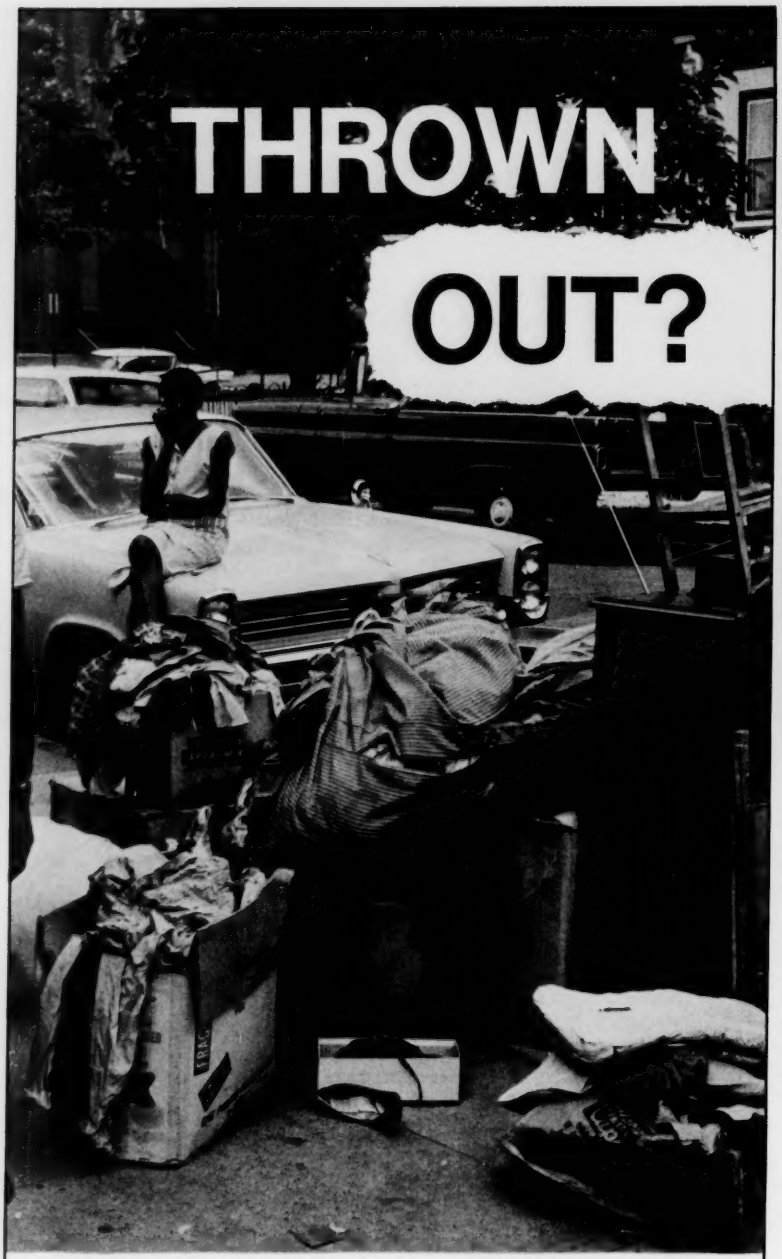
Come to **Neighborhood Center #1** and
ls, credit unions, play space and a better
all it takes is your time and CAP
t a baby-sitter, bring the kids.)
PHONE: 659-1100

COMMUNITY ACTION is when you dig the man ain't going to do it, so you do it yourself

Jobs? Improved living? Playgrounds? Credit unions? Day nurseries? Cheaper prices for better food?

It's up to you. Come to Neighborhood Center #1 and find out how you can CAP help yourself. It's your center, use it!

ADDRESS: 9th and P Sts., N.W. **PHONE:** 659-1100



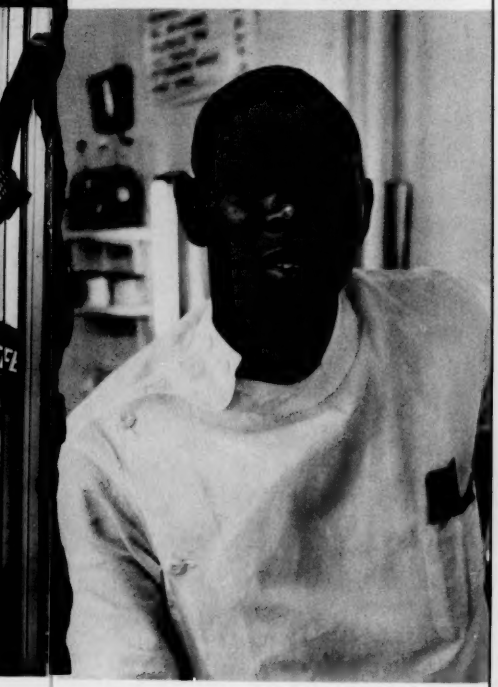
Maybe you were evicted illegally. Make sure, get a lawyer. If you can't pay—CALL or GO TO NEIGHBORHOOD LEGAL SERVICES CALL 628-9161

CAP

DOING NOTHING . . .

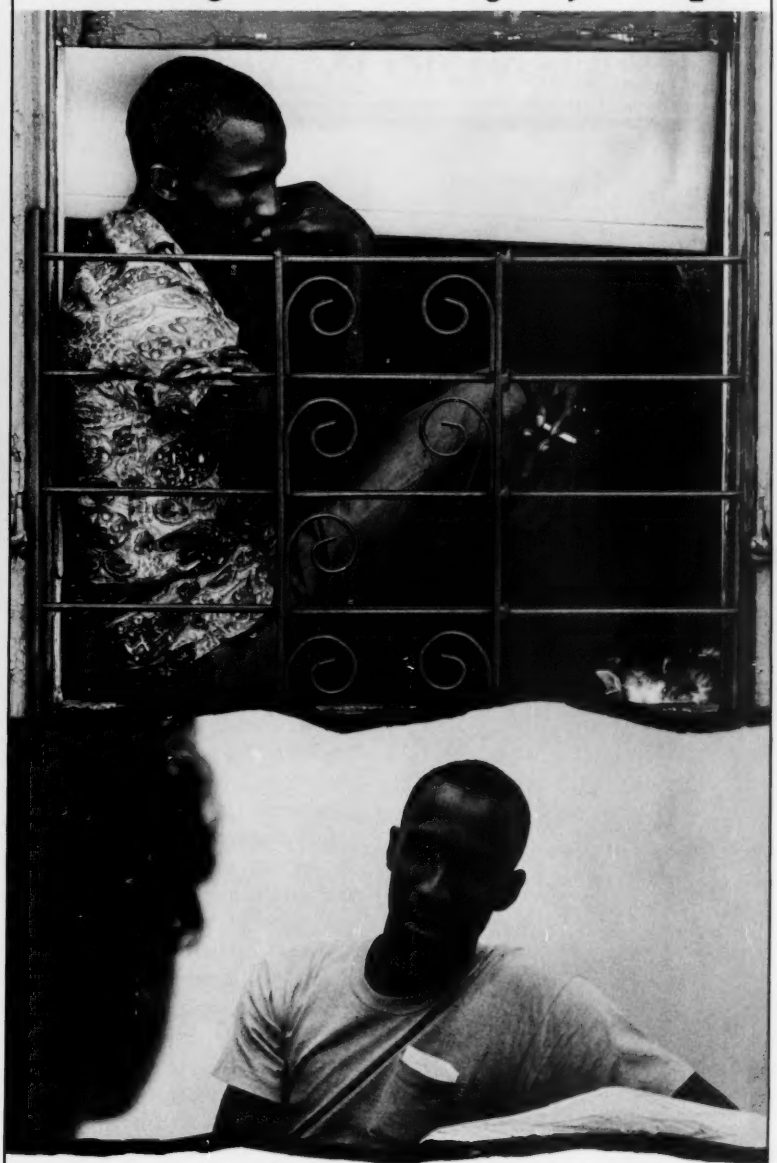
IT'S UP TO YOU. Come on int
#1 and get yourself straight
It's your center, it's free and i
ing on the corner. Neighborhoo
9th and P Streets, N.W. Where
the community action.

... DOING SOMETHING



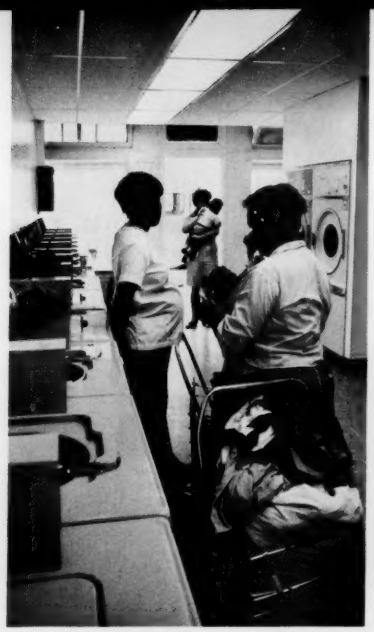
e on into Neighborhood Center
traight on your job problems.
ee and it's warmer than stand-
hborhood Center #1... CAP
. Where the action is,
.

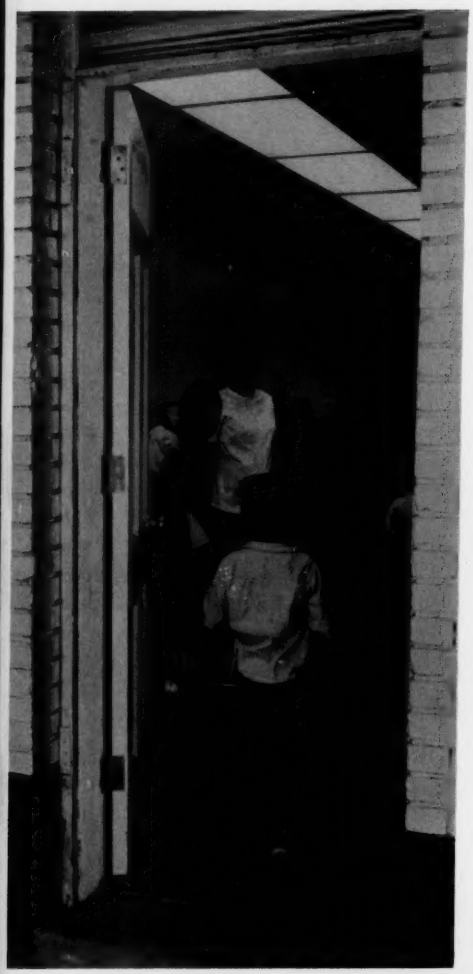
Nobody can save you, baby!



EXCEPT YOU. Check out NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER #1 for job training, better housing, money matters. It's your center to help yourself through CAP Community Action. Call . . . or WALK to . . . 9th St. It's not that far!

FROM CRACKER BARREL TO LAUNDROMAT





Pennsylvania Avenue cutting through Washington, D. C. southeast from the U. S. Capitol becomes the axis for a society that combines people of all colors of skin and different amounts of personal income —usually inadequate.

Here, settled between stores and restaurants that necessarily broadcast the cheapness of their products, is a sparkling new laundry. It is an experiment in neighborhood involvement.

Low-income neighbors in the area are buying shares to become cooperative owners of the laundry that was financed by a $15,000 Small Business Administrative loan; adjoining this laundry is a community center set up and administered under a $28,992 demonstration grant from OEO.

People on Pennsylvania Avenue are asked by a sign in the laundry window, "Would you like to own part of this laundromat? Shares are selling for $2 per share. Inquire within."

The sign works. In the first month that shares were up for sale, close to 50 people became owners of the laundry, its 21 new washing machines and eight new dryers.

Inside another sign says, "Please come in next door and relax while you wait for your laundry." This sign works also. During the day individuals stop in and at night they return in groups to talk together, drink coffee, find out what services are available to them and find answers to their problems.

The director, Jane Hardin, a young lady with background in social work, is becoming a master of the soft sell while two full-time workers from the low-income ranks talk with their friends and spread their subdued enthusiasm.

The laundromat-community center has become a focal point of the community because the people consider it "theirs." It has become their introduction to all of the social and welfare services open to them. It is significant that nine of every 10 people who relax at this D. C. center have never before come in contact in any way with the nation's War on Poverty.

Now they know. This up-dating of the old village store cracker barrel "talk" corner, with the added feature of co-op ownership, is certainly a communication idea with great potential in both urban and rural areas.

—PATRICIA SMITH

3,000 Showed Up!

East Cambridge CAP volunteers used "The Frug," hot dogs, parades to reach everyone in town.

There was just enough of a breeze to prevent the day from becoming uncomfortably warm for late August. Along the route of the parade through the streets of historic Cambridge, Mass., teenagers, with the marks of youth—the tight pants and the bell bottoms; mothers with their hands firmly grasping their offspring, who were just as firm in their attempts to pull away; men with their faces lined forever by the sun and the wind applauded the bands, the firemen, the drill teams and the veterans of other wars. The parade came to an end with a flourish at Thorndike Field in East Cambridge, but the activities had just begun.

By mid-afternoon an estimated 3,000 persons covered the surface of the field, eating hot dogs, drinking soda, watching athletic contests, winning prizes, dancing to the big beat of a rock-and-roll band—the monkey, the frug, the jerk.

Adults and children, the young and the old had been invited to the Field Day to demonstrate East Cambridge's solid support for a new community-oriented school. Not a school that would open at 8 a.m. and close down at 4 p.m., but one that would make its facilities available for such community activities as meetings, clinics and adult education classes.

The Field Day was the work of a group of East Cambridge volunteers, who, with the assistance of the Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee, spent two months in arranging the thousand and one details involved in such a massive project. Merchants donated the food and the prizes. Even the entertainment was provided without charge.

In supporting the Field Day, the CEOC demonstrated in clearly understandable terms its concern for the East Cambridge community, thereby increasing its own acceptability and credibility in the area. By identifying itself with an important community project, the CEOC established a rapport with many East Cambridge residents, who had previously regarded the agency as one that had no real meaning for them.

This attitude was due in part to the limited number of anti-poverty programs—two Head Start classes and an embryonic Neighborhood Youth Corps and Work Experience

program—that had so far been mounted in East Cambridge.

The mass gathering of area residents at the Field Day also offered the CEOC an opportunity for grassroots communications, an opportunity to expose people to its programs and its goals. This was accomplished through the setting up of a large tent that served as an information center.

Tables were filled with printed material from the Office of Economic Opportunity, colorful banners were strung to call attention to the various programs in the War on Poverty, and photographic displays with a local flavor were on view.

For many of the people at the Field Day it was the first time they really understood the poverty program. If they had questions—and they had plenty—workers in the tent gave them the answers.

This was the first effort of this type in Cambridge, but the response was great enough to encourage CEOC officials to consider the possibility of similar Field Days in other areas of the city. Cambridge itself is divided into six "opportunity areas", of which East Cambridge is one. Some 15% of its people are at the poverty level or below, but poverty here is not starkly visible.

East Cambridge has a rich ethnic mix — Italians, Portuguese, Irish and a very small percentage of Negroes—and a fierce pride that sometimes makes it difficult to accept the idea of assistance from the outside.

Paramount to the city's poverty program is a close identification with each of the areas so that the voice of the people can be heard. Neighborhood Planning Teams have been set up in each of the six sections, with membership open to all residents. Each of the Teams has formed, or is in the process of forming, task forces to deal with specific problems, such as health, housing, etc.

Recommendations from these groups are coordinated on a citywide basis and presented to the board of the CEOC for action.

Out of the East Cambridge Planning Team's meetings came the idea for a Field Day to mobilize community support for a new school that would also serve as a neighborhood center. The idea went back to the block parties of another era that brought neighbors together and gave them a sense of oneness.

The new school had already been approved by the city but the area residents wanted to make it clear what type of school they wanted, and to do this the Field Day was decided upon.

In the end, everyone benefited. The citizens put across their message of concern and the poverty program was helped by this face to face method of communication. The services the CEOC provided in helping organize the day were of an administrative nature, but without them, the project might well have died aborning.

As the day drew to a close, the people of East Cambridge showed what an impact the assistance given by CEOC had upon them. To Daniel A. Harkins, a neighborhood relations specialist, who had worked so closely and so diligently with the Field Day Committee, they presented a handsome plaque as a method of saying "thanks." As one spectator summed up the CEOC contribution—"it made everything possible".

—JAMES WILLIAMS

In Dallas, Texas some of the most creative minds in advertising have volunteered their time and talent to get the War on Poverty message across. The result is a stunningly effective example of what Community Action can accomplish.

Dallas

Spence Michlin of the Dallas County Community Action Committee, Inc., the administering agency, contacted some top public relations and advertising men in town and they readily agreed to work out a campaign to explain Community Action to the folks who needed convincing—the affluent Dallas stratum. The best technique? Low-key, "Madison Ave."-flavored public service announcements that attract the highly literate.

Bill Hill, creative director at Bloom advertising agency, wrote much of the copy. TV and still photographers Shel Hershon, Jimmy Murray and Shelly Katz came up with great pictures.

Local businesses and institutions put up the money for television time and a series of full-page newspaper announcements that began this fall in the Dallas "Times Herald" and other local newspapers.

The thinking of the DCCAC was that the total community should be involved in a program—not just the poor—and that it was a responsibility of those local residents who had particular skills to pitch in and help.

Very significant is the generous cooperation of private enterprise in helping spread the Community Action word. The famous Neiman-Marcus department store immediately agreed to underwrite costs of some of the publicity, as did other local organizations.

This kind of help from the private sector meant that DCCAC did not have to use anti-poverty money for this public information service.

This approach on a city-wide level is close to that of a Washington, D. C. neighborhood center director who hopes businessmen in his area will contribute money and services toward informing their communities of War on Poverty projects. (See "Explaining an Urban CAP Center," in this issue.)

The Dallas campaign is directed at middle-class citizens and speaks to them plainly and forthrightly.

Went

One of the series is headed "Big Joke," showing a well-off citizen in his new convertible with a bumper sticker proclaiming "I Fight Poverty, I Work."

The accompanying prose corrects the misconceptions implicit in the "I Fight Poverty" bumper sticker sentiment. It reads: "Harry put the bumper sticker on his car because he believes poor people should work for a living instead of taking federal handouts.

"Harry doesn't know it but the people who run the War on Poverty in Dallas County agree. These are the 150 non-salaried directors of Dallas County Community Action Committee, a local, non-profit corporation.

"They feel so strongly about this that they have set up many programs designed to provide the poor with the education and training they need to support themselves.

"They want to help get the poor off welfare rolls and on payrolls.

"Harry calls the War on Poverty a worthless giveaway program. That's because he doesn't know that DCCAC has no money, food or clothing to give away. DCCAC can only give the poor the tools they need to help themselves: opportunity and motivation.

"Poverty is expensive when you treat it halfway with hand-outs. Four out of five children brought up on welfare raise their own families on welfare. And taxpayers, including you, Harry, must support them. Laugh that off."

"For more information, write Dallas County Community Action Committee, Inc., 1307 Pacific Ave., Dallas, Texas 75202."

"This page donated as a public service by . . . . . (name of sponsor.)"

OEO Director Sargent Shriver hailed the Dallas effort as an outstanding achievement, "imaginative, daring, . . ." an approach with meaning "for many of American communities where Community Action is being undertaken."

"Mad Ave."

REACHING THE ESTABLISHMENT

"I'm not somebody who's talking from a book"

John E. Murray probably more than any other man in North Carolina knows what the power structure of his state thinks about the War on Poverty.

His knowledge is intimate for, as he says, he works "more than full-time" for the North Carolina Fund as a speaker to civic, business and professional groups, local governments and college faculties and students.

The Fund is a private, non-profit corporation financed by the Ford Foundation, the Smith Reynolds Foundation and the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation to find out why more than a third of North Carolina's people are in poverty and to develop programs to overcome that poverty.

John Murray, charged with communicating the ideas behind the Fund and the entire War on Poverty to North Carolina's skeptical middle-class, combines in his approach a direct and hard-hitting practicality with years of speaking experience obtained as a Presbyterian minister.

Rev. Mr. Murray earned his Bachelor of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary and his Master of Theology degree from Princeton Seminary in New Jersey. A native of North Carolina, Rev. Murray returned to his home state to pastor churches in New Bern and Wilmington. He also served in Baltimore, Maryland and Birmingham, Alabama.

In this interview Rev. Murray answers questions on the Fund's speaker system of communications as he sees it from his side of the speaker's rostrum.

An interview with Rev. John Murray, speaker to North Carolina's affluent.

Q: Rev. Murray, the object of the North Carolina Fund speaker system is to set up communication with those North Carolinians who are not in poverty, isn't that correct?

A: Right. We try to reach the power structure of the communities, and we feel the best way to do this, first of all, is through the civic clubs. I speak also to Chambers of Commerce and to mayor's councils. When we can't get the mayor's council itself, we ask the mayor to get together some of the prominent businesmen and civic leaders of the town. I also speak to various educators, faculties of universities and colleges and to sociology classes. This is the type of group we're trying to reach.

Q: How many people have you spoken to so far ?

A: A tally last week showed something over 4,000 since the program began. I started last February and have spoken to a little over 200 civic clubs alone.

Q: Are you a "crowd puller?" Do people come out to listen to you?

A: Frankly, we depend more or less on a captured sort of audience by setting up engagements two or three months in advance with clubs, knowing they have "x" number of members. We try to get the larger clubs although I have spoken to as few as three persons on a college faculty. We take them as they come.

Q: Are most of these people friendly to the poverty programs or are they against them?

A: I find that there's a lack of understanding as to what the programs are trying to do. I stress the self-help nature of these programs and try to counter the word that has gotten out that this is just another WPA, a make-work sort of thing, a give-away program by saying that

the only thing the anti-poverty program is giving away is opportunity, opportunity to better one's education and develop a trade skill.

Also, in the minds of most of these people is the idea that poverty is a matter of laziness, that the poor are lazy and indifferent to their own welfare. For this, I point out the success we have had in getting the poor people themselves interested in the programs.

Q: So you *do* feel you have to overcome a basic antagonism?

A: Yes. I have a question and answer period at the conclusion of my talk which is very valuable because it allows antagonism to show itself. I try to answer the questions as they come, and I find that this helps to let off steam, to get what's on their minds out; and usually at the conclusion of the meeting, I'll have any number of people come up and say, "Well, I never understood exactly what the program was all about before. If this is what it is, then I'm all for it."

Q: Do you want anything from these people besides their agreement that the War on Poverty is a good thing? Do you want them to do anything?

A: Frequently the question will come up as to "what can we do?"

Then I say, "Well, of course, one of the basic things you can do is to write your Congressmen if you're in favor of this and see that these programs are not curtailed but that the needed expansion takes place."

In the second place, I say to them, "There are certain groups in our state here who contribute financially to the program." I mention certain Chambers of Commerce who have given money.

In the third place, I mention volunteer work that a lot of our projects have as part of their program.

Q: Rev. Murray, according to some material I received from the Fund earlier, one of the most frequently asked questions is if the OEO program isn't just a scheme to put over integration. How do you answer that question?

A: Well, I point out that in our state 56 percent of all the poor are white, that only about 44 percent

are Negro. If this is true of a Southern state, certainly it would be even more true where you don't have a large Negro concentration.

I say further that this program is for all of the poor. That in some areas of our state middle-income people who have influence with the white poor have told them that this in an integration kind of program and to stay away from it. This is very unfortunate because these people really need to be reached.

I say also that if this continues and the Negroes stay receptive to these programs, the time may come when we may need a National Association for the Advancement of Poor White People.

Q: Your approach seems direct and practical. Is that how you would characterize it?

A: Yes, I try to keep it as practical as possible and very direct, steering away from theory as much as possible. As a matter of fact, the final

thrust of my talk to practically all groups is the cost of poverty to our country and particularly to our state.

Q: Rev. Murray, I know there is a man at the Fund who sets up your engagements. How does he do this? Does he solicit invitations?

A: Yes, he does. He sets up a tentative schedule with, say, a certain week for the Raleigh area, another for the Charlotte area, another week for the Greensboro area and so on. He has lists of the civic clubs, professional groups, the different colleges in that area, and he sends out notice of my arrival two or three months in advance, requesting

groups to mail back a flyer indicating they would like to have me speak at a certain time.

After a reasonable amount of time has gone by, say up to two to three weeks before I am to go out, after he has filled in as much of the schedule as he can from the mail reply, he gets on the telephone and calls the presidents or the program chairmen of the clubs, or he'll call the mayor. He sets up the radio and TV work as well.

Q: Have you been on radio and television a great deal?

A: We've done 70 or 80 radio stations and all of the principal TV stations in the state.

Q: If, Rev. Murray, a CAP or a state group wanted to begin the speaker system, what would you suggest they look for in qualities in the speaker? What qualities are essential for a speaker to be effective?

A: First of all, he's got to have a sound knowledge of the area and its people. He could get this with a good deal of reading and traveling throughout the state but he's got to know his people well. It helps me a great deal to be able to say, "I'm from North Carolina and I have lived here most of my life." I'm not somebody who's talking out of a book.

Also, the speaker must be able to talk on a businessman's level. I don't think a theoretician or sociologist is necessarily the best sort of speaker. He may be, he may not be—depends on how well he can bring his facts down to an everyday level with the people so they really grasp what he's trying to get across.

Q: Would he need background in speaking?

A: Not necessarily. I've heard some very effective speakers who have never had a speech course in their life. As a matter of fact, I myself have never had, strictly speaking, a college course in speech.

Q: How is a speaker going to know if he's effective, if he's hitting the mark?

A: You can tell. You can tell by the reception that people give you. I spoke to a J.C. club recently. The roughest people on a speaker are the Junior Chamber of Commerce groups, the younger men, because they are thrashing about looking for some answers. Some of their older colleagues in business are telling them that the government is getting too big and that money is being wasted. You'll always find in a group of this type that there are some who are going to gun for you.

Now, after a presentation to these Jaycees, the program chairman said, "You're going to see some fireworks."

I said, "Fine, let's have it."

And we did, we had some pretty sharp questions from this group.

Most in the club were spectators watching this interplay between these men and myself. There were only five or six that participated out of nearly a hundred.

I answered the questions as simply and directly as possible. I never try to evade a question. If I don't know the answer, I'll say simply that I don't know and that I'll try to find out the answer.

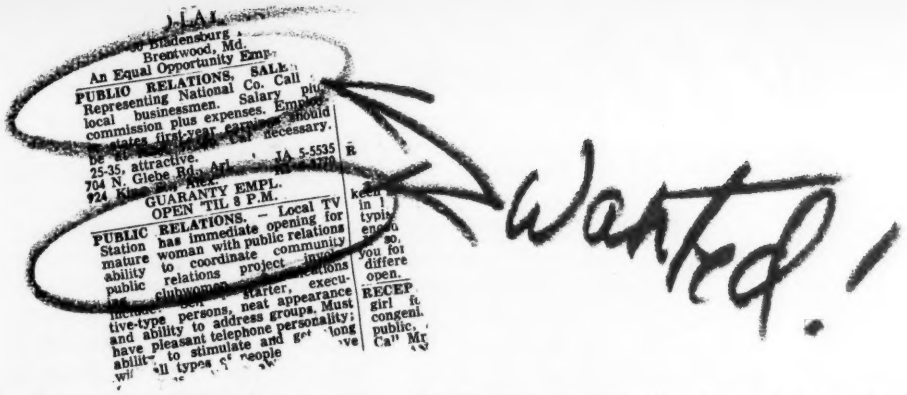
The interplay went on for nearly three-quarters of an hour. When I had finished, the club gave me a standing ovation.

We had the same kind of interchange at the conclusion of another J.C. meeting. There was an ovation and then one of the members stood up and said, "I would like to make a motion that our club go on record as commending the work of the North Carolina Fund and that we give them our wholehearted support.

It passed unanimously.

You know when you hit the mark.

—P. S.



Every Community Action Agency needs a public information or public affairs program. The name itself is not important—call it what you will—but the task of informing the public of the activities of your CAA is one that should not be neglected. These programs do not have to be elaborately organized, nor do they, at a local level, require full-time highly skilled personnel. But they should be firmly grounded in the belief that the way to win friends and influence people is to let them know what your agency is doing.

If a CAA operates in the dark, unmindful of the need to share news of its activities with the public, it can expect misunderstanding and a general lack of sympathy for its objectives on the part of the outside world. There is much that is new in the War on Poverty, and many of its phases are unknown to the public at large. This gives rise to misconceptions and misunderstandings.

A public affairs program seeks to dispel this lack of knowledge by providing information. A public affairs program should not merely react to queries for information, but should, on its own, let people know about the positive side of the agency.

Such a program should not be confused with propaganda, which is the deliberate attempt to influence public opinion by using any method at hand, including distortions and outright fabrications. A public affairs program presents the facts as they are.

The public affairs person should serve as the link between the agency and the public. When an agency speaks in ten different voices, the sound becomes confused. No one is quite sure who speaks with authority.

Under an ideal situation, all requests for information should be channeled through a public affairs person. The reasons for this are fairly obvious. Such a person would in all probability have the requested information at hand, or at least know where it can be obtained with a minimum of delay. Having one person responsible for information frees other persons to carry out their duties, and hence there is a saving in time and effort. Once a source has been established, people seeking information know whom to contact, and this saves their time.

An example of how a public affairs person can be of value is illustrated in the following:

Your agency launches a new project and the press in your city wants background information. Instead of calling a number of different people in your organization, a reporter can call one and obtain the information he needs.

An artist or scientist must have specific tools to work with, specific audiences to reach and hold their attention. So must the public affairs man.

Your specific audience is your community, the total community—the poor, the rich, the middle class, the white collar worker, the blue collar worker, skilled and unskilled, professional and laborers.

Your job is to gain their goodwill and understanding in support of your programs.

The vehicles available to you to reach your audience are the mediums of mass communications, press, radio and TV. However, you'll find, in many instances, you will want to reach only a segment of the general public and then only limited vehicles are necessary for use. These include neighborhood and foreign language newspapers; social, professional, business, service and fraternal organizations, clubs and associations; schools, churches, business establishments and labor unions.

As director of public relations, your voice becomes the spokesman for the agency. The confidence and sincerity with which you dispatch those duties will ultimately lead to success.

Your task is much broader than the issuance of press releases or the answering of questions. It should involve using every possible method available to tell the story of your agency. It is a task that requires imagination and ingenuity and a belief in what you are doing.

—J. W.

The Rural Dilemma

FAST & FURIOUS OR SLOW & TEDIOUS?

"Your Turn to Speak Out!" screams the poster showing the face of an angry young man with his mouth wide open declaring the end of his patience. The young man is poor, and the poster is calling the rural poor of Bertie, Northampton, Halifax and Hartford Counties, North Carolina to a People's Conference on Poverty.

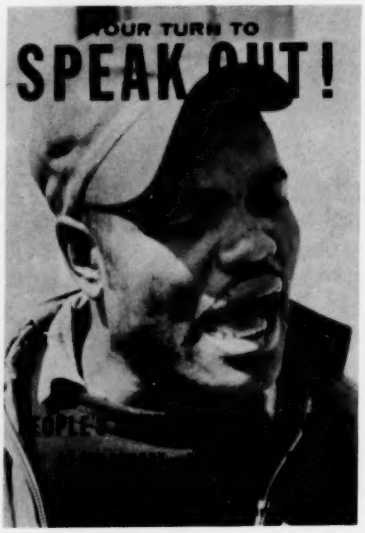
One thousand of these signs were posted throughout the counties—in store fronts, around telephone poles, in churches—and 5,000 brochures telling about the conference were given to the people they called.

Local people, wanting to get their poor neighbors out of poverty, volunteered their time for the verbal push and pull of door-to-door contact; and voting leagues and civil rights groups did a lot of country walking.

As a result, 800 people—75 percent of them tenant farmers who usually cling to their small farms scratching out an existence from cotton, tobacco or peanuts—came to the Woodland armory for an open forum at the end of July, drawn by a guarantee that it was their turn to speak out.

They came in carloads, often driven by local ministers or piled into old cars or pick-up trucks owned by the rural people themselves. Others were driven by members of a group called "People's Program on Poverty" (PPOP).

PPOP ("Pee-op"), formed of civic organizations and civil rights groups, sponsored the conference. Its goals were (1) to improve the poor folks' understanding of their local anti-poverty programs, (2) emphasize to the multi-county CAP staff the needs of the people and (3) motivate the poor toward helping themselves.



The practical substance of the meeting was to provide for an interchange between poor people and the Choanoke Area Development Association (CADA), the CAP which serves the four counties under the North Carolina Fund, a state-level private, non-profit anti-poverty agency financed by grants from the Ford, Smith Raleigh and Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundations.

And people did speak up. Not all of them. Many of these people had never been so far away from their farms before. For them, it was almost too much to dare going to the Woodland armory let alone venturing to speak before 800 people. But many of them did speak, often those who were more familiar with meetings, who had been involved in speaking out for other causes.

And the people listened. They heard how they need to let their voices be heard and organize for things like Head Start, rural sanitation, home management training, tutoring, loans and health services. This message to them stressed their own importance in solving the problems they were talking about.

The People's Conference was a large one, perhaps on the premise that audience size carries weight, that it gives a feeling of strength or can stimulate mass momentum.

But, measuring the success of this attempt to communicate in a rural area as only possible, through the action that results from such communication—viewed this way, the People's Conference can be seen to have been effective.

The conference proved two objectives: the rural poor can be reached and they can be stimulated to speak out and act in local programs.

This was the result of 1,000 posters, 5,000 brochures, a lot of walking by volunteers and a four-county conference.

A less dramatic but just as effective rural communications challenge recently unfolded in Washington County, Pennsylvania where the rural poor were "message carriers" in a door-to-door campaign to get low-income people out to vote for their area representatives to the Washington Green County Community Action Corporation.

There was no money for electioneering but the communications technique made the election a success.

The process of communication used to reach these poor and make the importance of the election known has potential for use in other door-to-door efforts as shown by the elec-

tion results of 7,162 votes—17.3 percent of the poverty population of an area of 860 square miles.

"We did not create a carnival atmosphere or use 'Batman' or 'Superman' symbols," say Charles Gillespie, Executive Director of WGCAC. "This was serious business. . . . The elected representatives would be operating one of the largest and most diverse corporations in the county."

In the June election, the poor residents of each of ten geographical areas of Washington County elected local committees of ten people to represent them. Their candidates could not have an income of more than $3,000 a year, hold a political elective office or office in a party organization, could not be a member of a board or commission appointed by a public body and had to be at least 21 years of age.

Volunteer caseworkers from the County Board of Assistance, which administers the various programs of the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare, distributed nominating petitions throughout the country—with one volunteer working in each of the ten areas.

To get on the ballot, people who wanted to "run for office" had to present a petition containing at least 15 signatures of area residents. One hundred and twenty-two petitions containing more than 1,830 signatures were submitted with some of the candidates showing as many as 4 petitions from their area.

As the candidates themselves were explaining the election to their neighbors, their message was being backed by coverage by the press and radio. This coverage resulted from the cooperation of such organizations as the Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, PTA's and church councils with which Mr. Gillespie had been meeting.

He spoke to more than 100 such organizations gaining a backing from the middle-class and assuring them that the local political power structure would not be involved in the elections.

Encompassing both the poor and the middle-class, the total communications program accomplished its goals—reaching the poor, involving the community and setting up continuing communication through the low-income people newly elected to represent the poor of their county.

This latter approach is slower than that used in North Carolina but that very quality may make it a sounder one. At every step in the Washington County effort the people contacted had to stop and consider what was being asked of them. A poor person who wanted to run for the poverty board was required to get a petition of nomination. This meant that candidates had to gain a personal knowledge of what they were seeking election to and then pass this information on to people whose signatures they needed.

Explanation, clarification, personal interest and contact was necessary at each step in the election process.

Finally the poverty elections had then to be explained to a sizeable portion of the total community. This involved a deeper penetration of information. Slower, more tedious, less emotional than the North Carolina methods, Washington County's way might be proper where local rural concerns are homogenous, where catalytic agents like civil rights and tenant farmer-landlord relationships are less clear cut.

Each method seems right for the area concerned which indicates anew that communications must come out of the style and needs of the people directly concerned and that there is no pat or nationally uniform answer to receiving or delivering the messages of the War on Poverty.

PROGRAMING CAP ON TV AND RADIO

"TV without tears," "radio is not dead," "films are better than ever" are all time-honored cliches but powerfully true just the same.

These audiovisual mediums are great communicative tools, perhaps the only way a large community audience can be reached.

This area of communication, however, is one many CAA's shy away from, largely because TV and radio are largely thought of in the lay mind as vast, impersonal systems that are inaccessible to all but headline makers.

Where CAA staffers recognize that broadcasting and film companies are a part of the total community, that these industries are very much interested in community problems, there is every possibility of close cooperation.

Using radio and television for special programs directed to specific Community Action groups should be intimately connected with the program area. Various approaches are being developed.

For example: Virginia's Norfolk State College is using educational TV for adult basic education. Station WKNO in Memphis has developed a method of using video to teach illiterates to read and write. (In two years, 2,000 adults have attained functional literacy through these programs.)

The Franklin Institute research laboratory has worked out a low-cost radio system to reach poor people in high density areas where Community Action programs are operating. Similar to the limited-area coverage of a college radio broadcasting station, such a radio facility would cover about 12 square blocks and the transmitter could be plugged into any household electrical outlet. Programs could consist of information about community services and anti-poverty projects.

People are often afraid of the mass media, particularly television, but if such mediums are seen realistically as an outlet of legitimate interest—not as a mouthpiece—without awe and without anger, they become accessible. Once this accessibility is apparent, a collaboration will come into being. Local network and independent stations will help, but they first must be convinced.

Who needs convincing? Program directors, news directors, on-camera on-the-air personalities, all those who make it possible to bring the CAP message to the community.

It is being done where a Salem-Dallas, Oregon-Community Action program makes use of a popular Spanish singer, Raymonda Gomez, to get information across to the Spanish-speaking community.

In Seattle, Washington, the Central Area Motivational Program, produced in collaboration with a local television station, directs anti-poverty information to people in the Central area who need to know what help is available, or will be available, where libraries and information centers are being set up and what they can do to help themselves.

In Oregon also the public relations committee of the Tri-County Ben Franklin Community Action Committee arranged with various TV stations in the tri-cities for three half-hour shows to interpret Community Action programs.

In Minnesota, as in other areas, the Leach Lake Community Action Program has its own radio program on station KBUN each week called, "Your CAP Speaks."

In Newark, New Jersey, the United Community Corporation, cooperating with the New Jersey Council of Churches, taped a series of half-hour programs for broadcast over the local stations in the area.

Early in the War on Poverty, the Westinghouse stations in New York, Pittsburgh, Boston, Chicago and Fort Wayne, believing that an enlightened and informed community can and will take positive action to help itself, prepared a series of programs on the War on Poverty, a comprehensive review of the problems and the solutions as foreseen.

To encourage more of this programing, OEO has worked with various pilot projects that hopefully will increase involvement between the CAA's and the radio and television media which can be adapted to suit the special requirements of the various media in the individual cities.

The effort began in Knoxville, Tennessee, at station WBIR-TV and radio. Peter Fenelly, program director of that station, seeking some way in which WBIR could further involve itself in community service affairs of the Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia and North Carolina areas the station serves, approached OEO.

As a result some 25 CAP officers of this area met to develop ways they might work with the station on a continuing basis while developing a collaboration with station programing to serve the community as a whole. A group of CAA staffers formed a committee to develop program ideas and suggestions for such a series. There is no peculiar magic involved in bringing this about. The CAA's know their programs. The broadcasting industry knows its talents. Meshing the two can be done.

Television and radio, under government regulations, must provide a certain amount of public service time. There is no reason why the War on Poverty cannot be that public service. For no program is so dramatic or contains so many elements adaptable to the broadcast media as does the War on Poverty.

How does it begin? A call to the program director and the news director to request a meeting is the first step. You must know your programs and your stations.

The easiest use of the media is to place radio and television spots —announcements of meetings, recruiting efforts and so forth.

In addition to audio-visual material prepared by OEO and sent directly to the stations specific articles keyed to local happenings can be placed through the program director or public service director, both of whom are usually more than delighted to use such materials.

The next area is news. Too often CAA organizations serve only as focal points for reporting of crises or problems, servicing news media at media's request rather than promoting news coverage of their own. There are hundreds of items ranging from the opening of a new center, the employment of the 100th Manpower enrollee, singular success stories of individuals affected by the CAA program, etc.

A suggestion given to the CAA's in Knoxville by a news director —"Don't you judge the news, let us be the judge. Just keep us informed," is a point to remember.

The difficult, but in the end rewarding, kind of cooperation developed between television stations and CAA's in Knoxville is the key to continuing use of these media by CAA's. It is the development of a series to tell the entire community what the War on Poverty is and what it can do.

This idea is not unique. It has, however, rarely been done on a long-range basis. It requires cooperation of station management, provision of technical facilities and assistance to produce the programs. It requires the CAA, or group of CAA's, to work together to provide the station with the story suggestions and other assistance needed to produce such programs.

Such a project demands that you know your audience. In Knoxville, as in many rural areas, there is a need to stress individuality and self-initiative. Thus, shows are being planned around the theme of the individual—and what the CAA and the War on Poverty mean to him or her. The range of subjects is enormous. Programs under consideration in Knoxville include:

Story of how an isolated community in Anderson County is bringing water to their homes for the first time. Project being worked out with the cooperation of Anderson Health Department, CAP and FHA.

Neighborhood Youth Corps boy in Claiborne County finding his way with the help of judge's wife and other community leaders. Told against a contrasting story in Knox County of a CAP board member with similar artistic ability.

Head Start in Claiborne County—what it does; how it is organized; the story of the child.

Multi-Purpose Neighborhood Center in Knoxville. Seen through the eyes of the neighborhood worker and a member of the so-called "establishment" to try to show how the neighborhood centers can bring together existing community agencies, as well as create new ones.

Title V—Work Experience and Day Care—to show that former welfare people can be good employees and to try to recruit trainees.

The work of a VISTA Volunteer in Community Action programs.

In certain urban areas, the theme of group participation is stronger and the concerted efforts of the community acting together may find greater acceptance with city audiences.

Topics which are forming the basis of a similar program project for urban use, a joint effort of Temple University and WFIL-TV in Philadelphia, include:

Manpower development and related training programs.

After Head Start, what? Parental and school follow up.

Legal Services and related problems.

Consumer education.

Organization of a Community Action Council.

Multi-purpose neighborhood service centers.

Problems of the aging: OEO's response.

Health problems of the poor.

Urban housing.

Almost all of the programing approaches outlined above are being developed by CAA's in cooperation with radio and television companies at the local level and involve no facilities or use of funds not within present budgets.

They are largely the result of CAA staff and media leaders coming together and working out projects that explain and inform about Community Action.

(This is the first installment of a two-part article.)

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Next Month:

Playwright Arthur Miller describes the ideal grass-roots poverty professional. A psychologist explores the communications gap between the "have's" and the "have-not's".